

The Mind and the Emotions

Feelings and Faith

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We have a few people still trickling in, but we need to get going. Prayer meeting is a good thing, but it is running a little long and we don't have much time between then and Sunday school. So let's go ahead and begin.

Join with me as we pray for God's help during this time.

Our heavenly Father, again, we appeal to you to minister to us this morning. We pray, Father, that you Spirit would give us understanding and also that we would be granted the ability to apply your Word and these truths to our lives. Father, we struggle much with remaining sin, but, Father, we have the hope that Christ has forgiven us, that Christ by the Spirit indwells in us and that we have the ability to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. This brings us much hope, much encouragement. But, Father, we pray that this, indeed, would be an encouraging time, we would be instructed and helped as we travel on in this side of glory. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

This is the next to last lesson through this book on feelings and faith and I am going to try to wrap up about four chapter's worth in the next... in today and next week. I want to begin this lesson by doing a little bit of a recap of last lesson and picking up where I left off. I wasn't able to finish everything.

Last week we were looking at Jesus as our pattern for emotions. And for the sake of our visitors just to let you know that we are going through a book called *Feelings and Faith* where we are looking at how our emotions are part of our humanity that God has given us for his glory, but it also comes under the effect of sin and as such it needs to be brought under the authority of God's Word and is an area in which we need to focus effort on sanctification.

And last week we looked at Christ as being our example and the pattern that he set. We looked at different aspects of Christ from an emotional standpoint. What was Christ like? What sort of emotions did he exhibit? And the four primary ones we looked at were that he, first of all, is that aspect of devotion, that Christ was thoroughly committed and devoted to serving God, to fulfilling his purpose so the Father's will was Christ's motivation. Christ was thoroughly devoted to the Father and he delighted in that and that was the second emotion was the delight that Christ had. We made the comment that the

Scripture do say he was a man of sorrows, but he was also very much a man of joy and delight. It was his delight to do the Father's will.

And that wraps up the first of the great commandments, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. So we see that Christ fulfilling that. But then the second law—that you love your neighbor as yourself—is also evident in Christ as he had great compassion for the lost and he had great love, a love for the Father and a love for his people.

But there are some lesser, what I call lesser emotions that Christ exhibited that we want to just touch on to try to be thorough. There are evidences that Christ marveled and that he was amazed. And I thought that was an interesting aspect of Christ's humanity that he would be amazed at something, that he would marvel at something.

And what is even more interesting is what the object was of his marveling or his amazement. There were some good things that amazed him and there were some not so good things that amazed him. He was amazed by the great faith that the centurion demonstrated.

You recall the story when he just said, you know, "You don't have to come to my house to heal. Just say the Word and my servant will be healed." And Christ said he was amazed and marveled at this man's faith.

By contrast, he marveled at the lack of faith that his own people in Nazareth demonstrated. And for that reason he didn't perform many miracles. So he marveled. He was amazed at their lack of faith. And as we already went through, we know that Christ exhibited righteous indignation and anger as we are told that zeal for God's house would consume him and he demonstrated that in kicking out the merchants from the temple.

And then there was also evidence that Christ was very stern and very firm, again, an emotional aspect of Christ. He was stern and firm when appropriate.

And you will notice that the occasions of Christ's anger and his sternness and his rebukes involve the things of God. Again, the faith of his disciples caused... or the lack of faith that his disciples demonstrated often caused him to rebuke them. He rebuked them for their lack of faith.

And then the Pharisees, he was most harsh to the Pharisees. And why? They were supposedly the religious leaders. They were the ones teaching the people the things of God. As they were self righteous and sinful, Christ came down hardest upon them.

Then those people that he did have to kick out of the temple. In each of these cases you see the focus of Christ's attention was on the religious aspect, on maintaining the honor of God and the glory of God. So he was harsh and stern when it was appropriate.

The variety, meaning the variety of his emotions that he was sometimes stern, sometimes angry, but also compassionate and loving, exhibited that Jesus demonstrated the proper emotion for the proper occasion. And he had this perfect emotional balance. He was loving and compassionate while at the same time firm. But he was always consistent. And he, therefore, stands as our model, our example.

And I always want to emphasize whenever we look at Christ as our example—and it is our desire to be like him, to exhibit Christ likeness and we come woefully short day after day and moment by moment there is that tendency to maybe become frustrated and to become dejected. And so whenever we look at Christ as our model we also have to remember that he was more than our model, that he was our Redeemer and he was our Savior.

So in the very act of us falling short, rather than being so frustrated by it, at that point we have to say the Christ we stand forgiven. It is by faith we look at the cross and that Christ forgives us in our shortcoming and then we carry on with the struggle.

Now as we go on looking at this topic of emotions we are in that part of the book where we want to emphasize cultivating godly emotions. We want to try to work in our own hearts and minds proper emotions as Christ did, the proper emotion for the proper occasion, for the appropriate occasion.

Now the premise so far has been that we have certain values, priorities that are the root of who we are. And those values and priorities get stirred up as circumstances come our way. They get stirred up either in a good way or a bad way. And they are going to produce some sort of action either good or bad.

Therefore, cultivating godly emotions, which involves mortifying sinful emotions, is fundamentally a spiritual matter, namely sanctification. So this is what we are trying to keep our focus on what we are accomplishing here. Our emotions give evidence of what the state of our heart is, what our values are.

So the emotional aspect of our life is really fundamentally a spiritual matter. We react to certain things based on what we believe and hold true and dear to our hearts. So true change has to begin with the heart.

So the first practical thing that we have to consider is your salvation. If there are any here who are outside of Christ, anything that you do to try to fix your emotional state is just... well, you could probably have some success on a superficial level, but it is not dealing with the matter of the heart.

The Scripture says, 2 Corinthians 5:17 that you are a new creature. The old things passed away. True change begins with being a new creation. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the real power for change and for being transformed into Christ's likeness. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that regenerates us, that gets us that new heart. It is the Holy

Spirit who convicts us of our sins. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates our minds and then ultimately all these things work together to transform us into the likeness of Christ.

And this process of being transformed, of being sanctified, of putting to death the sinful emotions and cultivating godly emotions involves supremely the renewing of the mind. Ok, the foundation is a regenerate heart. But then the next aspect is the renewing of the mind.

This process is gradual. And it takes effort. But it seems like the mind is, in a way, the gateway between the physical and spiritual worlds. This is the method that God has used to communicate himself and to bring about change. Well, some evidence of that.

God has always demonstrated himself as a God of revelation, that God reveals truth to men. And how does he do that? He does that directly and he does it indirectly. That is what we call special revelation and general revelation. God directly speaks to messengers, the prophets, ultimately in Christ who was the Word emphasizing that it is that communication. We want to know what God is like. We look at Christ. We listen to the message of Christ.

We have the truth. Christ himself was the truth. Then we have the apostles that were sent out to proclaim the gospel, proclaim the truth, the message, then the collection of the apostles' teaching and writings in the Scripture. So we have the Bible that we have to read, that we have to study. And in God's wisdom he set up the Church. The Church is the method through which the message nowadays is communicated. He has given preachers and teachers and evangelists. And what are evangelists but the preachers of the message of the good news?

So, you see, from beginning to end, the method that God has used to communicate are through people. And what has he communicated? He communicates the truth. How is that truth? What is the vehicle through which that truth comes to us? It is through our minds. He has given us minds to understand. All communication is revelation of the truth.

Now the Spirit residing in us, as we have said already, is that method that God uses to illuminate the mind. It is the Spirit of God in our soul that causes our mind to recognize the truth. We recognize the message of the gospel as the truth. We recognize the person of Christ as the truth and we recognize the entire revelation of God's Word as truth. Well, how do we do that? It is the Spirit who illuminates the mind to recognize the truth and understand the messages.

So if we come into understanding, now, of what the truth is, then by default, by definition there is going to have to be judgment of what is false. If we have now recognized this is the truth, our minds are also able, now, to recognize those things that are false.

So we see this tandem functionality of the Spirit and the mind.

Now, granted, the process is hindered by remaining sin and these are all things that you recognize. The process of this sanctification, of renewing the mind is hindered by this cloud both of our Spirit and our mind of remaining sin. So the means that God has established for our sanctification, our transformation to Christ's likeness is the renewing of the mind.

So I am saying there is that tandem, there is that interaction of how does our mind come to recognize the truth. Well, the Spirit resident in us illuminates the mind, illuminates God's Word to being able to recognize it as truth. That is not an intellectual accomplishment. It is a spiritual accomplishment. But once our spirits have been awakened or born, now our mind... you have this interaction of our mind now feeding our soul through the truth and the Spirit of God illuminating our mind to recognize the truth. That is why I know it may sound kind of mystical, but this idea of the mind kind of being the gateway of the physical world and the spiritual world. How do we interact with the truth? It is through reading and knowing God's Word taken in through the mind and understood by the mind and feeding the soul. So...

And that is...

So how does that relate to emotions? And that is where I want to try to stay on track with that aspect. How does this renewing our mind effect our emotions? Well, again, our emotions rely upon our values. What we hold to be true and right within our soul produces an emotional response. The acceptance of truth is informed though the vehicle of the mind.

So some Scriptures to prove these things, Romans 12:2 is the classic verse that teaches this.

"I urge you therefore,"¹ in verse one.

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed..."²

There we go with the sanctification.

Be transformed how?

"...by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."³

Romans...

¹ Romans 12:1.

² Romans 12:1-2.

³ Romans 12:2.

Yeah. Yes, sir.

[off mic voice]

Ok.

[off mic voice]

Very much so.

What I want to try to convince us of this morning is how this is a biblical means that we need to apply. And that is why we are quoting these verses not just to be a proof text to try to buttress some other point, but I want us to recognize how this truly is a biblical mandate for us.

Romans 8:5-6 says:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.⁴

Philippians 2:5:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”⁵

[off mic voice]

Right. Exactly.

And then Philippians 4:8. We keep coming back to Philippians four. Let me go ahead and read that one while we are here in Philippians, Philippians 4:8.

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”⁶

And I think I would have to say if there is one verse that we could take from this study is this one. If we could apply this one, I think it would have much impact upon our sanctification and upon our emotional situation.

⁴ Romans 8:4-6.

⁵ Philippians 2:5.

⁶ Philippians 4:8.

My suspicion is that because of our remaining sin we tend not to think this way. We tend to be frustrated and we tend to be sinful and we think of the negative things. We think of all the problems, the grumbling and complaining that is so prevalent. And this stands in contrast and this would have to be something that we need to apply whenever we are frustrated and whenever we are dejected. And this is... and I would have to say this is not just positive thinking. This is scripturally mandated.

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”⁷

Now the relationship between the mind and emotion, I am going to quote from pastor Boardman on this one because he succinctly captures this... these connections.

“Right thinking about God produces and cultivates godly emotions such as peace, joy, confidence and hope. ‘You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you.’ Right thinking about Christ produces and cultivates godly Christ like emotions like joy, compassion, righteous anger and love. Right thinking about spiritual realities produces and cultivates spiritual life with peace, security and comfort. Right thinking about ourselves and others produces the right feelings of humility. Right thinking about suffering and eternity produces the affection of hope. Right thinking about Christ’s accomplished work of redemption motivates godly emotions for holiness such as gratitude and tender heartedness.”

So we can see. It is clear the relationship of emotion with the mind and renewing the mind. Why do we...

I like to use an example in thinking about parents, the whole parent, child relationship. When the kids are really little and they get frustrated over, you know, some... what seems to us as a slight thing and they are just in tears about it. You know, whatever it is, their stuffed animal, you know, got a rip and, you know, its arm is coming off or something and they just fall apart. And they are just so emotional. And you as a parent, you know, try to... what do you try to do? You try to appeal to their reason to some degree, right? You say, “You know, don’t... you know, don’t worry about it. Don’t let it bother you so much. You know, we can fix it. We can sew up his arm.”

And so you try to give them the right perspective, the right thinking. You teach your child, if you would just see it this way you won’t be so distraught. And isn’t that the same thing the Lord is telling us?

And, granted, our problems are more significant than a ripped toy, but still by comparison and by scale, isn’t it the same? You know, I have lost my job. I have got this disease. The threat of death is upon me. And what does Christ, what does God say?

“Be still and know that I am God.”⁸

⁷ Ibid.

And he gives us all of God's Word to buttress our faith and to correct our thinking and to say, "Don't think of it that way. It is not the way that you see it. It is the way that I am telling you in my Word. Trust, hope, believe."

So so much of God's Word is given to us to correct our thinking. And in correcting our thinking, our emotions come into light with the truth. That is why it is so important to recognize that this is truth and this is revelation of God so that we can renew our mind and we can think properly about our situation.

[off mic voice]

Right.

[off mic voice]

Right.

[off mic voice]

Right.

[off mic voice]

He said he was just as comfortable in battle as he was in the bed.

[off mic voice]

And how could he say that? Because he had a keen awareness of the sovereignty of God. Right. We... and that is one of the reasons for this study is because our... we tend to be emotionally driven people. Our culture has raised us that way that I think something to be true because I feel that it is true. And it is backwards. What we are trying to do here, especially in this particular lesson is to show that the opposite needs to be. We need to think properly. And as we think biblically and properly then our emotions will come in line with right thinking rather than having our emotions driving the cart. We need to have God's Word driving the cart.

So what are the practical things, the means of experiencing these things and applying these things? And this comes back to what we all know to be true, but this is a good opportunity to remind us. I don't know about you. Well, I pretty much know about you because you are just like me. We are all the same in this regard. We need to be reminded regularly about these basic, fundamental truths, not because we don't know them, but so often because we don't do them. So to hear it regularly repeated helps us and reminds us. We have to get back to the fundamentals. What are the fundamentals of the Christian faith? It is that we need a consistent diet of God's Word. It is God's Word that is going

⁸ Psalm 46:10.

to feed the soul. It is God's Word that is going to shape our mind. And as our mind gets transformed and conformed to Christ's likeness, our feelings will fall into place. We have got to get back to the fundamentals. Read your Bible daily, consistently and pray regularly.

John 15:11 Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."⁹

There, again, the relationship. "These things I have spoken to you."¹⁰

We have God's Word. We have the words of Christ. These are the things that he has spoken.

"I have spoken."¹¹

Why has he given these things to us? One reason is that his joy—and we remember what Christ's joy was, was to do the will of the Father, to serve his people. Those were the things that brought joy to Christ. These things, God's Word spoken to us that his joy may be in us and that our joy may be full, may be complete.

We also go into the aspect of abiding in Christ. He abides in us and we abide in him. How can we experience and know Christ likeness and this joy of Christ, but to have communion with him, to be abiding in him. And how do we do that? Again, the means, God's Word and prayer.

This is the verse that regarding prayer, John 16:24 says:

"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."¹²

I hope that this lesson, this kind of parentheses, has been a help to us and to you personally and I include that here in with prayer that this would be your prayer and it has been my prayer, to know the joy of Christ. And we need to pray that we would know the joy of Christ and we would need to pray in faith that God would change us to be more like Christ who delighted to do the will of the Father, who delighted in his Word, to delight in the things of God.

If we don't take delight in these things, then we can be encouraged from this verse.

"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive."¹³

⁹ John 15:11.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² John 16:24.

¹³ Ibid.

Let us pray that God would transform us and change us so that we do take delight and we do have faith to trust him.

A study on prayer teaches us that as we have talked about before to ask and you will receive. We know that that is not just a name and claim it kind of theology. Rather, it is the fruitful harvest of abiding, obeying, being devoted, having communion with God.

Included in the transformation into Christ likeness is the things for which we pray change from selfish to godly desires which God then blesses with answered prayer. In other words, we are promised that we will receive answers to our prayers, but as we change, as we become more like Christ the things we pray for become godly and not selfish. And as that happens then God answers those prayers as opposed to the common theology of our day that says that you should expect to be prosperous, wealthy and healthy and all of these things and this name and claim it sort of theology that is not biblical prayer. It is not a biblical theology.

As we become more like Christ we will love the things of God more and we are not selfish and our prayers will reflect that and then we will see our prayers answered.

We all experience the ebb and flow of spiritual delight and spiritual dryness. And quite often is it not true that our spiritual times of dryness coincide with times when we are not in God's Word?

I think we have all experienced that. The world and our lives seem to fall apart and crumble and nothing goes right, it seems. And those times usually coincide with I have neglected those spiritual duties. I haven't been in God's Word. I haven't been communing with him. I haven't been in prayer.

Again, saying the things that we know to be true, just as reminders.

A recommended reading, a section on... by John Owen on spiritual mindedness.

He says, "One principle end of it," that is prayer, "One principle end of prayer is to excite, stir up and draw forth the principle of grace, of faith and love in the heart unto a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things with affections suitable unto them. Those who design not this and in prayer know not at all what it is to pray."

Now, what is he saying? Prayer itself stirs up the emotions. Prayer excites the emotions. Now I found that to be encouraging because so often we pray when? When we feel like praying, when I feel spiritually minded, when I feel spiritually stirred up, then I pray. And what he is... the principle we can draw from this insight is that the times when we don't feel like it we must pray because prayer itself stirs up and excites us when we were otherwise dry and cold.

The topic of renewing the mind is integral to our sanctifying, cultivating godly emotions. We must engage the mind, discipline the mind to think upon God's Word, to commune with God, to dialog, converse with God through Word and prayer.

Renewing the mind involves very much becoming saturated with God's Word, with God's thoughts. As some of us have read the Puritans, aren't you amazed at how they weave in biblical phrases and biblical concepts? They don't quote verses, it is just in there. It is just part of their speech. Why is it part of their speech? Because their mind is thoroughly saturated with God's Word.

I think I could imagine they are not there with their concordance all the time. What was that verse? Oh, here it is. That would be good verse to put in here. No. It is just their speech. They write as they are thinking, oh, that example, this example, this praise. It just comes out because they are so saturated with God's Word.

So that becomes an example to us. As we renew our mind we have to be saturated with God's Word to know it, to memorize it, to believe it. It becomes second nature. And you see what happens. God's thoughts become our thoughts.

And I am just going to hit some highlights here of the last chapter of the book, chapter 21, because it fits so well with this topic. Reading, meditating and imagining.

He uses an anecdote, pastor Borgman does, he uses this anecdote, this story of how as a pastor he often comes across men who say, "I just don't like reading and I have never been a reader."

And I can relate to that.

And pastor Borgman's pastoral counsel to them and I am sure with all lovingness and all kindness, he says to them, "Get over it."

God has given us his Word, a book to be read and to be studied. And he has given us pastors and teachers and we have the advantage of having their books from years past as well as present. We have got to be readers. And that involves discipline and I stand before you as one who needs to hear this more than anyone.

Meditate. Engage the mind to memorize his Word. To meditate upon God involves just reflecting upon God, thinking back to what God has done in your life, thinking back on what God has done through the saints that we read the stories of in the Bible.

And then imagination. Whenever we do read, use your imagination. God has given us imagination. We can enter into the stories, into the narratives.

Remember early on in the lesson in the series we talked about how the Word of God is given to us not like a legal brief, but it is poetry. It are narratives. These are real people

who lived in a real time in a real place and it helps us to engage our imagination as we read and to meditate on these things.

What was it like for Joseph to be thrown into a pit? What was it like for his brothers to betray him? What was it like for him to be carried off by nomads into a strange place to be thrown into prison? What was it like for him to be elevated and one day a prisoner, the next day the number two in all of Egypt. What was it like for him? What was it like for Christ to endure the suffering on the cross and to sweat drops of blood as he anticipate the cross? God has given us imagination to enter into these stories and to feel what the saints felt and to know what they knew?

When you do that, the Bible comes alive. And when you have that in combination with the Spirit of God illuminating our minds, you can't help but be stirred up emotionally.

The last thing... the last counsel I would give is we have to limit our TV and movie watching. And, again, this is a regular struggle. And the reason is not to be prudish. The reason is whenever we watch TV and movies we expend a certain amount of emotional energy. We relate to people. We relate to characters in movies and TV and I think the worst are soap operas and... but people get sucked into this things, don't they? And these characters become almost like friends in a way. There is an emotional attachment that is... that you feel towards these people. Movies make you cry. They make you laugh. And there is only... you only have a certain amount of emotional energy, if you will, emotional bank account. And you expend it on movies and with these fictional characters and then someone, a brother or a sister comes along who needs your sympathy and needs you to weep with them and to laugh with them and you have spent. You are emotionally spent because you engage in these things on a regular basis and through fiction. And I think there is a legitimate case to make that part of the problem with our entertainment world is that we expend our emotional energy there and then we find ourselves bankrupt when we need to spend emotional energy with one another. It is something to consider and think about.

And I always like to bring up this point when we think about these things. You have heard me perhaps say it before. The word "amusement," right? Muse means to think. Amuse means not to think. And amusement is a time when we are not thinking. We disengage. We are receives of stimulus, of information, of fun. It is scintillating, but we disengage the mind quite often. That is its purpose. Right?

So just be aware of that. And it should be obvious that we can't indulge in those things too much before it is detrimental. So there are a lot of things that we have covered. Hopefully some of them we can apply and God can use to help us to become more Christ like, to sanctify our emotions.

Well, we have run out of time again. Let's pray and ask for God's help on the service.

Our Father, we thank you for this time that we could just consider the state of our hearts and just take inventory of the world around us and where we fit into the world and how

the world tries to mold us into its shape, into its likeness. And we thank you that you have given us your Word to tell us the truth that we might be conformed, we might be molded into Christ's likeness. And, Father, we struggle with this tension daily with our natural desires to be like the world. But we thank you, Father, that you have given us your Spirit. And now our heart and our devotion and our love is not for the things of the world, but for Christ. So, Father, we pray that you would help us to engage our mind to think biblical thoughts, to know your Word and even above that to commune with you by being in your Word and having that dialog where you teach us and we respond to you in faith and in prayer. And, Father, we trust that you have done these things with a purpose and you have given us these things to conform us and we thank you that we can have much faith in knowing that change will come about, though slowly and gradually. We are thankful that it does happen and we pray that you would help us, that we would persevere to become more like Christ.

Father, now we pray about the remaining service. We ask that your Spirit would be with us, that you would minister to us that we might glorify you in our time of worship. In Christ's name.